

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-9 and 11-22 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 17 and 19 are amended, and claims 2 and 10 are canceled. Reconsideration based on the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that claims 2-8 and 10-22 contain allowable subject matter.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Nguyen at the interview held February 25, 2003, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

I. Pending Claims 1, 3-9 and 11-22 Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,037,920 to Mizutome et al. Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of dependent claim 2, which the Office Action indicates includes allowable subject matter. Independent claim 9 has been amended to include the features of dependent claim 10, which the Office Action also indicates includes allowable subject matter. Thus, the rejection

of claims 1 and 9 under §102(e) over Mizutome is moot. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is respectfully requested.

Further, Applicants have rewritten dependent claims 3, 6, 8, 11, 17 and 19 to be in independent form.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3-9 and 11-22 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

Date: October 15, 2003

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